

## *Loretta Sanchez*

*1960–*

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
DEMOCRAT FROM CALIFORNIA

*1997–*



Image courtesy of the Member

**LORETTA SANCHEZ WON ELECTION TO THE U.S. HOUSE**—her first political office—by defeating a longtime incumbent. During her tenure in the House, Congresswoman Sanchez has established herself as an advocate for economic development, a strong military, and education issues. In 2003, she also made history when her sister, Linda, won election to the House: The Sanchez sisters are the first pair of sisters to serve in Congress.

Loretta Sanchez was born in Lynwood, California, on January 7, 1960, the oldest daughter of Ignacio Sandoval Sanchez and Maria Socorro Macias Sanchez.<sup>1</sup> She graduated in 1982 with a B.S. in economics from Chapman University in Orange, California, and in 1984 she earned an MBA from American University in Washington, D.C. From 1984 to 1987, she worked as a special projects manager at the Orange County transportation authority. Sanchez then entered the private sector in the investment banking industry and, later, worked as a strategist at a leading consulting company. A registered Republican and fiscal conservative, she broke with the GOP in 1992, believing the party had marginalized immigrants and women.

In 1996, Sanchez declared her candidacy in the race for a California district encompassing central Orange County. During the campaign, she touted her business credentials, particularly her effort to secure funding from national companies to establish programs between local grade schools and state colleges in Orange County.<sup>2</sup> Despite her lack of political experience, she defeated three male contenders in the Democratic primary with 35 percent of the vote. In the general election she faced long-time incumbent Republican Bob Dornan, a controversial and outspoken conservative. Her platform included support for small- and medium-sized businesses, investment in high-tech research, and federal funding for school improvements. Sanchez appealed to the traditionally conservative district's voters with a tough-on-crime agenda; she also advocated a ban on assault weapons and the elimination of the gun show loophole. Sanchez prevailed with a 984-vote margin

out of more than 100,000 cast, eking out a 47 to 46 percent win.<sup>3</sup> For more than a year, Sanchez had to contend with Dornan's challenge to her election. In February 1998, the House voted overwhelmingly to dismiss Dornan's complaint.<sup>4</sup> Later that year, she faced Dornan again in the general election, one of the most expensive races in the country. Sanchez prevailed with a 56 to 39 percent margin of victory. In her three subsequent re-election bids she won comfortably, garnering at least 60 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> Her clash with Dornan provided Sanchez with national exposure, making her one of the Democratic Party's primary congressional conduits for appealing to Latinos, women, and young voters.

When Congresswoman Sanchez took her seat in the House on January 7, 1997, she received assignments on the Education and Workforce Committee and the National Security Committee. In the 109th Congress (2005–2007), she serves as the ranking woman on the Armed Services Committee and as the second-ranking Democrat on the new Homeland Security Committee.

A former member of the United Food and Commercial Workers, with family roots in the union movement, Representative Sanchez is a congressional friend of organized labor despite her strong ties to business. She voted against “fast track” trade authority, which authorized the President to negotiate trade agreements without congressional approval, oversight, or amendment. Sanchez also broke with the William J. Clinton administration when she voted against granting China permanent normal trade relations. Sanchez has a mixed position on trade agreements, basing her approval of treaties on whether such agreements constitute “fair trade.” Sanchez also is a congressional leader on global human rights issues.<sup>6</sup>

In line with her fiscally conservative principles, Sanchez joined the Democratic Blue Dog Caucus, advocated a major overhaul of the Internal Revenue Service, and supported budget deficit reductions. Nevertheless, she believed the federal government should play a role in improving local life, particularly in education. As a former pupil in the Head Start program, Sanchez vowed to make federally funded education programs available to low-income children. She also authored legislation to encourage tax-free bonds to spur funding of school construction. As a Representative, Sanchez also has enjoyed success steering federal money and projects into her district that have helped both the local and the state economy of California.

## FOR FURTHER READING

*Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress*, “Loretta Sanchez,”  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

## NOTES

- 1 *Politics in America*, 2002  
(Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2001): 152–153.
- 2 “Loretta Sanchez,” *New Members of Congress Almanac for the 105th Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Almanac Publishing Inc., 1996): 32.
- 3 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,”  
<http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/index.html>.
- 4 “House Formally Dismisses Dornan Challenge to Sanchez,” 13 February 1998, *Washington Post*: A6; Jodi Wilogren, “House Gives Sanchez Reason for Celebration: Task Force Drops Inquiry, Leaving Her With Incumbency, National Celebrity and Fund-Raising Prowess,” 5 February 1998, *Los Angeles Times*: A1.
- 5 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,”  
<http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>.
- 6 *Politics in America*, 2002: 152–153.